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Babies by the book: A qualitative exploration of parenting advice literature



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Abstract

This thesis explores parenting advice literature directed to parents of young children. My research includes investigating parents' experiences and responses to reading and what prominent messages can be found within popular sources. To explore this topic, I used two main methods. First, I conducted in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers about what they had read in terms of parenting advice. Second, I analyzed a selection of popular parenting books to explore what messages they were conveying. Both of these approaches revealed that parenting advice remains highly gendered. Mothers were portrayed as the primary caregiver and fathers as the mothers' assistant. In terms of their responses to these expectations, the parents I interviewed demonstrated agency by actively selecting which pieces of advice to accept and which to reject. This agency also had a gendered dimension, as mothers were the ones taking on the work of customizing the advice for their family.

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